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ABSTRACT

Management Systems International (MSI), with funding from United States Agency for International Development Office of Transition Initiatives (USAID/OTI) and in coordination with other partners, is implementing a program in Sierra Leone entitled "Youth Reintegration Training and Education for Peace" (YRTEP). The object is to provide non-formal education activities to ex-combatant and other war-affected youth. The program is designed to include 40,000 participants, roughly 50% ex-combatants and 50% non-combatants. The training provides a series of non-formal education modules for youth/young adults in areas such as reintegration and sensitization for ex-combatants; vocational and life skills counseling; livelihood skills development in agriculture and other labor-intensive areas; protecting the environment; health issues; civic education; and functional literacy and numeracy. Modules are delivered to the target population by teams of two trainers per group of 20 participants. The program is designed to use the existing network of community and religious groups as a delivery system. Groups are offered the opportunity to participate, and, if qualified, receive technical assistance, training of trainers, and the full package of materials to impact the training and education modules of the program. The evaluation utilized a questionnaire designed to elicit responses from program participants that would indicate the type and nature of behavioral change that has occurred as a result of participation in the YRTEP program. A total of 482 interviews were completed. Findings suggest the YRTEP program has accomplished what it set out to do and has made a significant difference in the lives of the participants. Those who participated have accomplished things they would not have accomplished if they had not participated. (BT)

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IMPACT EVALUATION

YOUTH REINTEGRATION TRAINING AND EDUCATION FOR PEACE (YRTEP) PROGRAM

Contract No. AOT-C-00-00-00091-00

SIERRA LEONE 2000 – 2001

Prepared for:

United States Agency for International Development
Office of Transition Initiatives

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FOREWORD

There are hundreds of stories told by Master Trainers (MTs), Learning Facilitators (LFs), and YRTEP participants that tell of the impact of this program on the lives of individuals and communities. Some of these stories have been collected by MSI so that they can be shared with existing and new program participants. As an introduction to this impact evaluation report and to provide a context for the evaluation we share a few of these.

A town chief, and Kamajor from Malegohun, BA was shot in the foot by the RUF. He had sworn never to speak to any RUF again but the training has helped him to cool down his temper and forget about the bad things they did. He is now able to sit together, laugh and eat with them. He has also started listening to people, including his wife. He admitted that before he was a crooked chief. He was not honest to his subordinates, he took bribes to decide cases in people's favor regardless of the truth and he took loans from people without ever paying them back. He has changed the way he talks in public—he used to be very autocratic— and has learned how to manage conflict between people. He used to flog people and make them pay fines. He was a real "Okonko" type chief before but this has now completely changed. Having participated in YRTEP he has realized that this is wrong and is looking forward to returning home so that he can start administering his duties fairly and honestly. Now that he has learned how to manage money he will be better able to pay back loans. He is also now aware of the value of the resources in his chiefdom, which is rich in diamonds, gold, cocoa and coffee. His brother, FL, confirmed that BA has changed as a result of the program. He said that BA used to flog his wife every week but has now stopped and is even settling disputes between his brothers and their wives!

AK, a Learning Facilitator, made a tough decision last year when he decided to break rank and disarm in Kenema. He had been waiting to disarm in Tongo when Sankoh was captured in June 2000. He realized that he was wasting his time in Tongo but wasn't sure of the reception he would get in Kenema. They had heard the President on the radio saying that they would not be harmed if they came to disarm but others said this was a lie. He decided to try anyway and secretly went with his wife and daughter to Kenema to disarm. He was transferred from Kenema to Daru and on his arrival learned that YRTEP was interviewing candidates to be LFs. He was eager not to be sitting in the camp doing nothing so he filled in the application to do the training. He was accepted into the LF training and during it started to reflect seriously on what his own skills were and how best he should direct them. By the time he was discharged from Daru he had decided to sign up for a computer training course, so he went first to Kenema and then to Bo where he was able to secure a place at a center. Soon after he arrived in Bo, he heard an advertisement on the radio about the YRTEP program and immediately went to the WV office and offered to continue being a LF. He said that he is grateful to the YRTEP program for helping him to make sound decisions about his future. In the jungle the only way to survive was through aggression. He has now been able to shed that behavior and finds that being polite and calm is helping him make better progress. He said that all those at the computer center know of his past but because he has changed his manner and is gentle he does not have any problems there. He has even become firm friends with other ex-combatants at the school and has encouraged them to participate in the YRTEP.

CH, was originally from Makeni. She ran from Makeni to Guinea in 1998 when the rebels attacked. From there she ran again when in 2000, the Guineans started to harass Sierra Leoneans. She came to Lungi on her own, her husband having left her in Makeni and was very sick and depressed about her situation. Many of the IDPs in Lungi are seeking refuge, doing nothing. When CH heard about YRTEP she became interested and decided to participate. She started really enjoying the program and forgetting about her problems. One night, she said, she couldn't sleep for thinking about what they could do. She kept hearing her daughter saying "Mama, forget! Mama, forget!" She then suggested to the YRTEP members that they start something to keep themselves busy, help them forget about the war, and make them self-reliant for tomorrow. With help from her daughter in The Gambia, they put up a baffa from which they could start skills training and they now have 5 rooms. They recruited trainers from the community who agreed to

provide their help voluntarily. They now have 65 registered trainees who are learning skills in tailoring, knitting, needlework, material design, batik, gara tie-dying, soap making, plastic and cloth weaving, catering and literacy and numeracy. They are also about to start pottery, which will be available for men. They will sell their products to make the center sustainable. CH sees it as a way to help young girls and women who are displaced to regain control of their lives. It is also providing an alternative to those who were frequenting the UNAMSIL base in order to make a living. She thinks she will stay in Lungi now and dreams of setting up similar centers elsewhere.

AK is a renowned batik artist having represented Sierra Leone overseas on three occasions. Until the advent of YRTEP he worked alone in Makassa selling his batiks through different boutiques in Freetown. When he became a LF for YRTEP he began to realize that he should be sharing his knowledge with others in the community. Participants were asking him if he would teach them as they greatly admired his work. He felt very proud that they were interested and as a result has taken on 10 trainees to teach the skills of the Batik trade. As a group, they have also established a garden for the other 10 participants of YRTEP since not all of them would be inclined to batik, and they have started to build a structure for raising poultry.

Once he had participated in the LF training, EW was keen to start helping to redirect his fellow ex-combatants. As a group they realized that "Sierra Leone's development lies squarely on the community" and that they should not wait for government to solve their problems. Prior to the training the road from Njama to Mano was not usable so participants and LFs organized themselves and did road work to re-open the road. They also rebuilt footbridges on the road to the highway and are pressing SLRA to assist in rebuilding the bridges for vehicles. HL, a participant, said that YRTEP has helped her realize that group work is more profitable and helps bring unity to a community. She said that previously she always thought it was the responsibility of the chiefs and elders but now realizes that she is a key player in the development of the community.

MR, a participant from Helibu said that the training had made youths more aware of the problems caused by the poor relationship between themselves and the elders. As a result they established a youth group to act as a "go between" between the youths and the elders. This has played a major role in resolving petty conflicts and addressing issues relating to the acceptance of ex-combatants within the community. Last year one RUF ex-combatant returned from the bush to the community but the local authorities wanted to handle him badly and drive him from the village. The ex-combatant discussed his problem with some of the youths and expressed his desire to come back and work with the community. Through the sessions on forgiveness and reconciliation the members of the YRTEP youth group recognized that they should try and talk to the chiefs and elders to prevent them driving the youth. They went to them and were able to convince them that they would take responsibility for the ex-combatant. Since that time he has enrolled in the YRTEP program and has become actively involved in community work.

I. Background

Management Systems International (MSI) with funding fromUSAID/OTI and in coordination with other partners, is implementing a program in Sierra Leone entitled Youth Reintegration Training and Education for Peace (YTREP). The target population is ex-combatant and other war-affected youth who were to be provided with non-formal education activities in reintegration, livelihood skills development, remedial education and basic literacy and numeracy skills as appropriate. This program was seen as the anchor for the Government of Sierra Leone's disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) program that would engage, track and monitor all registered ex-combatants, and provide as many of them as are willing to participate with this wide range of training. The program is designed to include 40,000 participants, roughly 50% ex-combatants and 50% non-combatants. Efforts were made to begin the program giving priority to locations of highest density of ex-combatants, beginning in the areas near Freetown where most of the ex-combatants were located.

The training provides a series of non-formal education modules for youth and young adults in areas such as: reintegration and sensitization for ex-combatants; vocational and life skills counseling; livelihood skills development in agriculture and other labor-intensive areas; protecting the environment; health issues; civic education and functional literacy and numeracy. The modules are delivered to the target population by teams of two trainers (Learning Facilitators) for each group of twenty participants. The Learning Facilitators (LFs) have been trained by teams of Master Trainers (MTs) who have been trained by MSI staff in the content of the program as well as in training of trainers and group facilitation skills.

The program is designed to use the existing network of community and religious groups as a delivery system. Existing groups are offered the opportunity to participate, and, if qualified, receive technical assistance, training of trainers, and the full package of materials to impart the training and education modules of the program.

Dr. Gloria Fauth, after extensive consultation with a group of Sierra Leonean behavioral scientists, educators and ex-combatants, developed the following modules with associated Facilitator Guides for use with the ex-combatants and war-affected community members:

> Module 1—This objective of this module is to provide the opportunity for participants to improve their self-understanding as they move from the world of combat into the world of being a non-combatant. As they go through the process of self-realization they make some critical decisions about what they value, what they like to do, what they can do and how they can use these attributes to generate income for themselves and their families. In addition, this module begins the process of becoming literate using the non-formal education approach introduced successfully in Africa by ActionAid.
>
> Module 2— Module 2 is designed to provide participants with the acquisition of some coping mechanisms that will enable them to better manage the stress they encounter in their daily lives so that they will be able to function more effectively; to create an awareness through sensitization and training that will enable participants to improve their skill to take calculated risks, make sound judgments, communicate effectively, handle peer pressure, manage their emotions including anger and anxiety, and solve day-to-day problems. Attention is given to dealing with loss and grief and with the basics elements of the process of reconciliation. A session on human rights is also included. The literacy/numeracy work continues in this module.
>
> Module 3—This module introduces activities designed to raise the awareness of participants about the need to reclaim the environmental foundation of Sierra Leone, provide knowledge of ways to prevent/reduce environmental hazards, impart knowledge about good farming practices in Sierra Leone, create awareness about judicious use of the environment for human survival, e.g., terracing, tree planting, composting, soil preservation, and to continue to increase the reading and writing vocabulary of participants.

Module 4 — Health and Wellness

The units in this module deal with health related issues. The objectives of this module are to provide information on common local diseases, their symptoms and both traditional and western treatments, local herbs and roots used for medicinal purposes, the importance of clean drinking water and how to insure its purity, sexually transmitted diseases and their symptoms and treatment, including HIV/AIDS, maternal and child health and to explore some ways to rebuild villages and town that will enhance a healthy environment. This module includes several stories written in Krio so that participants will have the opportunity to read material written in that language. The literacy/numeracy work continues in this module.

Module 5— Democracy, Good Governance and Conflict Management

The units in this module cover an array of topics including democracy, good governance, conflict management, corruption, and reconciliation (as related to rebuilding the nation). The first unit provides the opportunity for participants to learn about democracy as a form of government, how it differs from other forms of government, what the basic principles of democracy are and how these principles work in action. It introduces the fact that corruption can and does exist in Sierra Leone and provides the opportunity for participants to take an active role in controlling it. The second unit focuses on corruption in Sierra Leone and methods of controlling corruption. The third unit focuses on conflict management including the major causes of communal conflicts, the functions of conflict, strategies for conflict management and win/win approaches to conflict management. The fourth unit is intended to provide the opportunity for participants to analyze what went wrong in Sierra Leone and how they can be involved in rebuilding the nation. The literacy/numeracy work continues in this module.

II. Evaluation Design and Methodology

MSI, under the YRTEP contract with USAID/OTI, was tasked with the conduct of an impact evaluation of the program. This evaluation was intended to assess the impact of program activities on the behavior and attitudes of the participants, specifically in regard to the degree to which participants have moved in the direction of peaceful reintegration into their communities, their ability to read and write, and their ability to do arithmetic procedures. Indicators of peaceful reintegration include their ability to become self-reliant, manage conflict, manage stress, do effective problem solving, become more self-aware and self confident, and being better able to plan for their future.

The evaluation utilized a questionnaire designed to elicit responses from program participants that would indicate the type and nature of behavioral change that has occurred as a result of participation in the YRTEP program. The questionnaire was designed by MSI and field tested in Sierra Leone with 20 program participants in April 2001. Minor adjustments to the questionnaire were subsequently made to ensure that all the items were clearly understandable.

In addition, at each selected interview site, the interviewers conducted a short interview with the Learning Facilitators in order to get their perceptions of changes in participants' behavior. (See Annex 1 for the final questionnaires.)

Prior to departure for Sierra Leone to conduct the evaluation, an Interviewer Manual outlining the interviewing procedures and supplying detailed information about each questionnaire item was prepared for use in training the interviewers and for them to use as a resource throughout the data collection period. (See Annex 2.)

In July 2001, Dr. Fauth and Ms. Roberta Warren traveled to Sierra Leone to conduct the evaluation. One of the first tasks was to draw a representative sample of participants to be interviewed. A random sample of 56 sites out of the 1300 existing sites was drawn. Only sites where it was believed that participants had completed Module 3 or more were included in the sample, as only after completing Module 3 could any behavioral changes be expected. (See Annex 3 for list of sites.) At each selected site the interviewers randomly selected 10 of the 20 participants to be interviewed using a procedure that involved the program

participants blindly selecting a bead from a box containing an equal number of red and blue beads. Those participants who drew a red bead were interviewed and those who drew a blue bead were not.

Nine Sierra Leonean interviewers were hired to conduct the evaluation interviews. The interviewers were selected based on their previous experience in conducting interviews, their language skills (all major local languages used in Sierra Leone were represented) and the fact that they had no previous association with the program. The latter was believed to be important in order to insure that the interviewers would be perceived as neutral parties and therefore not biased in one direction or another about the program.

During the week of July 3-7 Dr. Fauth and Ms. Warren trained the interviewers. The sessions included instruction in interviewing skills, the construction of the questionnaire, proper conduct of the interview, accurate recording of interviewee responses and a significant amount of supervised practice both with one another and with a group of participants from the Freetown area. In addition, considerable time was devoted to translating the interview questions from English to Krio, Mende, Limba, Kono and Temne. This was essential so that the oral translation of the questions retained the same meaning as the English version. Each interviewer was assigned six sites with the instruction to interview a random sample of 10 participants at five of these sites and to use the sixth site if necessary to substitute for any site where it was not possible to conduct the interviews. Interviewers were assigned to sites where their language skills would be appropriate.

Interviewers traveled to their assigned sites and conducted the interviews over a period of 3 weeks, from July 9-27, 2001. Completed interviews were returned to the OTI office at the U.S. Embassy in Freetown where they were coded and the data entered into an SPSS file for analysis. A total of 482 interviews were completed.

III. Findings

A. Demographic Information

The sample was comprised of one-third males (34%) and two-thirds females (66%). The distribution of the sites in the four geographic regions of the country was proportional to the current distribution of training sites. The Northern Region, with 5%, was the smallest, as that part of the country has only recently become accessible. The Southern Region made up 27% of the sample and the Eastern Region 29%. The Western Region, that has the most training sites in operation, made up 39% of the sample. All of the participants interviewed had completed Module 3. One-fourth had also completed Module 4 (17%) or Module 4 and 5 (10%). The majority of participants were between the ages of 15-34 years of age (79%). This is consistent with the anticipated age range of targeted participants. Approximately one-fourth were over 35 years of age and only 2 were 14 or younger. The majority of participants in the sample (62%) were married, 34% were single, 2% were divorced and 2% were widowed. For the age ranges in the sample this is an expected distribution.

B. Training Impact

The overall goals of the program were: 1) to contribute to the reintegration of ex-combatants and war affected youth by providing substantial engagement with these groups starting from their demobilization to their return to civilian life; 2) to assist in the process of reintegrating both ex-combatants and war affected youth into their communities; and 3) to provide remedial education opportunities to ex-combatants and war affected youth.

The training was designed to impact the participants on a number of dimensions and levels with very specific objectives as noted above in the module descriptions. In keeping with this and for analysis purposes, we have divided the impacts into the following five categories:

- *Personal changes/growth*, an increase in coping mechanisms and behaviors which are useful in all aspects of life, e.g., goal setting, problem solving, self-awareness, self-confidence, interpersonal skill development, becoming more self-sufficient, etc.;
- *Knowledge acquisition*, learning about specific, targeted topics;
- *Acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills;*
- *Reintegration and associated activities*;
- *Rebuilding the community*.

One may think of these as somewhat of a hierarchy of impacts that build upon one another. Personal changes/growth and the acquisition of needed personal skills (effective listening, planning, goal setting) open participants to information on specific topics (health, environment, civil society, etc.). Becoming literate and numerate allows participants to move forward on their own to acquire an array of new knowledge and skills and to apply these skills to their lives in ways they were previously not able to do. Optimally, this results in reintegration into a community and ultimately, the rebuilding of communities.

All of the participants reported that they found the training program overall to be useful with 98% stating that it was very useful and 2% finding it somewhat useful.

1. Personal Changes/Growth

Respondents were asked a series of questions which measured personal growth in a number of areas including conflict management, stress management, problem solving, self-awareness, ability to support self/family, self-confidence and action planning and implementation.

Conflict Management

Participants unanimously (99%) responded that they were better able to manage conflict as a result of the training. Of those who responded that they were better able to manage conflict 81% said that their conflict management skills were a lot better, 17% found that their skills were somewhat better and 3% reported being a little better at managing conflict. When asked what their most important learning had been, 7% stated that it had been learning to manage conflict.

> "There are many conflicts at the Lorry Park where I get my living, I can now share my own experience from the training and settle conflicts at the Lorry Park."

Stress Management

> "Had I not learnt how to control my stress and trauma, I would have either gone mad or died as I had lost my husband during the war and I had children to care for."

Nearly all of the respondents said that they were better able to manage stress (99%) and of that group 75% said that they were a lot better at managing stress, 22% said they were somewhat better and 3% said they were a little better. About 5% of the participants said that learning to manage stress was the most important thing they learned in the training.

"Because my hand was amputated during the war that was a torment in my heart but having got this training I am ready to reconcile with any ex-combatant."

Problem Solving

When asked if they were better able to solve problems as a result of the training, 98% said that they were and of those, 65% said that they were a lot better at problem solving, 29% said they were somewhat better and 6% said they were a little better. Two percent of the respondents said that being able to solve problems more effectively was the most important learning for them.

"I know my values now. At first I did not know what I was capable of doing, what I like, what my friends like, what I do well. Now I can solve problems."

"Knowing myself has helped me escape being a scorn in society."

"The program has completely changed my life style. Got a changed behavior."

"It has helped me to detect my positive side, to know myself and show concern to other people's problems."

Self-awareness

One of the objectives of Module 1 was to have participants become more aware of their strengths, abilities and interests. The training appears to have accomplished this objective with 99% responding that they were more self aware and of that 99%, three-fourths (73%) said that they were a lot more aware, about one-fourth (24%) said that they were somewhat more aware and 3% said they were a little more aware. One third of the respondents said that becoming more self-aware or more accepting of themselves and others as the most important learning for them.

Ability to Support Self/Family

"Previously as a result of mismanagement I was not adequately able to care for my family but as a result of this program I can now adequately care for my family through planning."

When asked if they were better able to support themselves and/or their families 83% stated that they were. In a country where there are few jobs available the program emphasized the importance of becoming self-sufficient by developing underutilized resources available in their communities to generate income. Of the participants who stated that they were better able to provide support, 53% said that they were a lot better able to do so, 32% said they were somewhat more able and 15% said that they were a little better at providing support.

"I have learnt not to be idle. It was idleness that has caused me to join this war."

"Having the skill in business has enabled me earn my living as a result of profit making."

"It has drastically reduced my potential of dependence on others for my sustenance."

"Helps me generate more income for self-reliance."

"I have been a diamond miner and I used to actually have money but I hadn't the necessary skills in managing that money, but on going through this training I now have plan of action for my money."

Self-confidence

Increasing the self-confidence of participants was another objective of the program. As nearly all (99%) of respondents stated that they were now more confident of themselves it is clear that this objective was achieved. 82% said that they were a lot more confident, 16% said that they were somewhat more confident and 2% said they were a little more confident. The comments of participants when asked for any additional information they wished to share repeatedly mentioned that being more self-aware, being able to manage conflict and handle stress had made them more self-confident.

"Because of this learning I can now stand in front of my people and address them. It has also educated me how to contact people."

Interpersonal Skills

When asked if their interpersonal skills (e.g., active listening, public speaking, etc.) were better respondents were unanimous in stating that these skills were better. 76% said that their interpersonal skills were much better, 20% said that they were somewhat better and 3% reported that their skills were a little better.

"As a former fighter, I never had the patience to listen to people, so even when they may be saying the right thing, I do not listen to them. Now I have proved that active listening facilitates good communication and good relationships."

"Because it has helped me to concentrate and listen carefully when others are talking to me. It also taught me to respect others and their feelings."

Goal Setting/Action Planning

Another objective of the program was to assist participants in establishing goals for their future. 97% of the respondents stated that they currently have clearer goals for the future. Of the participants who reported that their future goals were clearer nearly 69% said that their goals were a lot clearer, 29% said they were somewhat clearer and 2% found their goals a little clearer.

"It has really exposed me to so many avenues. Like to be self-reliant, make plans for my future, and to respect my values."

"The most important thing that I learned was that I should learn how to plan well. Before this training, I was somebody who would just do things haphazardly. But now when I wake up in the morning I plan what to do and I follow that plan throughout the day. I have found out I am better organized now."

In order to be able to take action to make changes in their lives it was important that participants learn how to develop and implement plans for action in order to reach a goal they had set. All but 5 (99%) of the respondents said that they were better able to develop and implement action plans. Of the 99%, 61% stated that they were a lot better at this, 34% said they were somewhat better and 6% said they were a little better at action planning. Four participants said that learning to develop and implement action plans was their most important learning.

"I can now plan well and organize e.g. how to mobilize people to do a cleaning activity."

Clarifying Personal Values

"Most important learning was the one [*module*] that teaches me about my values. That I should respect others if I want to be respected. That as a human being, I have certain abilities that I must use for my welfare."

Many of the Sierra Leonean consultants who worked with MSI to develop the content of the modules stressed the importance of working with participants to clarify their personal values. It was believed that the years of conflict had eroded individual and community values and that these needed to be revitalized. Module 1, directly, and other modules, indirectly, address the importance of clarifying values. Almost all of the respondents (99%) reported that they had a clearer sense of their personal values. Three-fourths stated that they had a much clearer sense of their values, 23% rated this as a somewhat clearer sense and only 2% found this to be only a little clearer. 5% of the respondents rated the work on values as the most important learning for them.

"Respect for each other's values. I was somebody who never cared for others and what they did. Now, everybody is my brother and sister including RUF."

Learning Facilitators at each of the interview sites were asked to identify behavioral changes that they had noted in the participants. Specifically, they were asked if they found that participants interpersonal skills had improved, if their reading skills had improved, if their number/ computation skills had improved, If they were better able to solve problems, and better able to peacefully resolve conflicts. Without exception they stated that they had observed improvement in all of these behaviors. These observations provide independent verification that the program has fostered significant changes in the behavior of participants.

2. Knowledge Acquisition

The next series of items in the questionnaire asked participants to state whether they believed that they had acquired specific information from the training and the level (a lot, somewhat, a little) of accomplishment they had achieved.

Environmental/Agricultural Information

Creating an awareness of environmental issues in Sierra Leone and introducing some basic concepts about effective farming practices were objectives of Module 3. Nearly 100% of the respondents said that they were more aware of environmental issues. Over three-fourths (76%) reported that they were a lot more aware, 20% said they were somewhat more aware and 4% said they a little more aware. The content of this module and its relationship to planting crops and becoming self-sustaining was named the most important learning by 12% of the participants.

"Because it has brought awareness to me - at first I was a person that never know the value of agriculture since I started coming in to this program I have seen how important it is. Now I can put it into practice, that is by planting around my compound."

"I am thankful to this program, as it has taught me how to preserve my environment. When I shall return to my village, I would use my plot to mine wisely and not recklessly. I have also known how to do my gardening for a better yield. Thanks to the program."

"Learning about my environment. That I should not fell trees recklessly because that would lead to destruction of the environment. I now know good farming times in the year."

Health Information

Respondents who had completed Module 4 and 5 were also asked to respond to questions related to the content of those modules.

"It has enabled me to avoid so many illnesses and if affected, how to take care of it."

Module 4, which focused on health issues, was intended to increase the level of understanding of participants about common illnesses and how to treat them and provide information on the dangers of drug abuse. All respondents to this question reported that they had acquired more understanding of common illnesses. 83% stated that they were a lot more knowledgeable about these, 14% said they were somewhat more knowledgeable and 3% were a little more knowledgeable. Four percent of respondents said that learning about health issues was the most important learning in the training program.

Module 4 also introduced participants to the causes, prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including HIV/AIDS. All of the respondents stated that they better understood STDs and how to avoid infection. 81% reported that they had a lot more understanding, 19% said they somewhat more understanding.

"Having realized the impact of drugs to youths from the training, I decided to avoid drugs as they were leading me to a miserable life. Now I am comfortable with parents, friends and members of the community."

"I have got the basic skills in writing and counting. I have gained a lot from the training like to control stress, the use of drugs and sexually transmitted diseases, I can now safeguard myself."

Democracy/Good Governance/Corruption

Understanding the principles of democracy, their rights and responsibilities as a citizen, the causes and costs of corruption in their communities, were objectives of module 5. All the respondents who had completed this module said that they had a better understanding of corruption. 71% said they were a lot more aware of the causes and costs of corruption, 27% responded that they were somewhat more aware and 2% were a little more aware.

Of the respondents who had completed module 5, 93% reported that they better understood their rights and responsibilities as a citizen. 78% stated that they understood their rights and responsibilities a lot better, 18% said they understood these somewhat better and 4% reported that they had a little more understanding. Three percent of the respondents reported that learning about their rights and responsibilities was the most important learning for them.

"I now know how to vote, my rights and duties as a citizen."

"I have a clearer understanding about democracy and the effects of a corrupt society."

"It has also enlightened me about good government and how to vote."

3. Acquisition of Literacy and Numeracy Skills

The YRTEP program placed significant attention to increasing the literacy and numeracy skills of participants as most participants had been unable to attend school during the years of conflict and thus,

would have minimal, if any, skills in reading, writing and arithmetic. Literacy and numeracy training was a thread that ran throughout all modules, as these are skills that can only be learned over time.

Literacy

Respondents were asked if their reading/writing skills had improved as a result of the program. 98% stated that their skills in this area had improved: 57% reporting that they were a lot better, 27% that these skills were somewhat better and 16% stating that their reading/writing skills were a little better. All respondents said that improving their reading/writing skills was very important or important to them. 15% of the respondents stated that learning to read and write was their most important learning.

"The modules which have taught me to read and write and how to do business for income generation."

"I want this program to continue, since it is a learning program for those who did not go to school. Plenty of people know that at this age they will not go to school but they can be home and learn through this program."

"I have been given the opportunity to learn how to read and write once again."

"Because now my secret is a secret as I don't need to ask anybody to read and write for me."

" It has taught me to read and write."

Numeracy

Similar findings were identified when respondents were asked if their number/computation skills had improved as a result of the program. 99% reported that these skills had improved. All respondents stated that improving the number/computation skills had been very important (86%) or important (14%) to them. 68% of the respondents said that their number/computation skills had improved a lot, 21% responded somewhat improved skills and 10% said their skills were a little better.

"I will not be a fool anymore and can sign for myself. I will not be cheated in counting anything. I will reap enough money for myself and be independent."

"This will help me to know whether my money will be spent the good way or the bad way."

"When I formerly do business I sometimes end up without any profit, but on going through this training I am now seeing some profit in my business."

"Formerly, I hadn't the necessary skill in trading - I always go at a loss but I can now make tremendous gain (profit)."

4. Reintegration and Associated Activities

The problems related to ex-combatants and war affected youth returning to their community of origin are complex. Many of the participants are still living in IDP camps and are unable to return to areas of the country due to security concerns. Still others may not even know the name or location of their village of origin. Thus, it is significant that three-fourths of the respondents were living in their community of origin at the time of this survey. Of this three-fourths, 58% said that they had returned to their community of origin and 16% reported that they had never left their community.

Participants were asked to identify in what ways the program had helped them to reintegrate into their communities. Being reunited with one's family and with one's friends were regarded as important indicators that the individual had achieved a level of reintegration. Finding a way to earn a living and contributing to the rebuilding of the community were also considered to be indicators of reintegration. 95% of the respondents reported that the program had helped them reunite with their family and 98% stated that it had helped them reunite with their friends. 90% found that the program had helped them find a way to earn a living and 98% believed that the program had helped them find a way to contribute to rebuilding their community.

In order to further explore the impact of the training in regard to specific actions taken by participants that indicated that they had taken responsibility for supporting themselves or had done anything else that indicated movement towards reintegration and/or self-reliance, respondents were asked several questions as shown in Table 1. Table 1 provides the percent of respondents who responded that they had done the indicated item and the percent who reported that they would *not* have done this if they had not taken the training.

Activity	Percent Yes	Percent who would *not* have done if not in training
Planted crops	85%	77%
Found a place to live	70%	29%
Started a business	40%	77%
Became an apprentice in skill or trade	33%	79%
Enrolled in another training program	28%	85%
Returned to school	15%	57%
Found a job/work	12%	71%

Table 1

Noteworthy about this data in terms of program impact is the very high percentage for most items (except finding a place to live) of actions that would not have been taken were it not for the impetus of the training. This is particularly true for planting crops, which 77% would not have done if the respondent had not received the training, and for income generation/self-reliance related items (started a business (77%), became an apprentice in skill or trade (79%) enrolled in another training program (85%), and found a job/work (71%). Not coincidentally, these correspond with the emphasis placed on agriculture and income generation options in the program.

Respondents were also asked to identify any other activities in which they had engaged that they thought of as things they had done for themselves toward supporting themselves or anything else that they would not have done if they hadn't taken the training. A variety of activities were listed. Table 2 presents the most frequently mentioned activities and the percent of participants who reported having engaged in them.

Activity	Percent
painting / general clean-up in community	43%
farming/fishing/hunting/trapping	21%
income generation -- varied	20%
conflict management/mediation	11%

Table 2

Also listed were forming drama groups/community sensitization activities, organizing sports activities, teaching adult literacy and civic education in their community, providing secretarial services, providing health care and first aid, driving and mechanical repairs, organizing and expanding social clubs, and pulling together resources for community projects.

"Helped me to identify myself as part of a community. Shaped my life to become a model now in my community. Taught me how to make a decision for myself."

"Because it has introduced me to the following: how to handle stress, address conflict, start business and to learn on my own. Now my people see me as very serious."

"This program enabled me to know about myself and help me live in my community without any trouble again."

"It helps bring about peace. Had this training reached everybody, I am sure there would have been no war. With this training, as it expands, I am sure it will bring about peace forever."

The Learning Facilitators interviewed at each site where participant interviews were conducted were also asked to identify activities in which they had observed the Learning Circle members participating. Of particular relevance was that approximately one-fourth of the activities identified by the Learning Facilitators involved generating income (making small cigarette boxes, producing palm oil, soap making, gara cloth dyeing and a piggery).

Return to Combat

Another important indicator of reintegration was whether or not participants had returned to fighting since participating in the training. Only 1 respondent reported that he had returned to fighting, one-fourth of the respondents said that they had not returned and three-fourths stated that they had never fought. The reasons given by the one-fourth who reported that they had not returned to fighting for not returning, included one participant who said that he was too badly wounded to return, 56% who responded that they were anti-war and 33 % who said that the training had changed their attitude about fighting. Participant's comments about this were especially poignant.

"Formerly, I was just engaged in killing aimlessly my fellow citizens. Now I have decided not to fight since I have gone through the program."

"Because the training has taught me that we must live at peace with all men, I was encouraged to comply with the disarmament process."

"I was almost going to be a rebel but by the help of my parents and finally this training, I have completely forgotten about that and knowing myself can also make my home very peaceful."

"It was because I didn't know what not to do was one of the reasons why I was engaged in killing innocent people. But with this program I promise not to ever go fighting again."

"I found out fighting could take one nowhere. I want to restructure my life."

"I am very happy to have joined this program. I was a fighter who knew only how to destroy. Now I am ashamed that I took part in this. This program has given me confidence."

"Because, I know that the war has yielded us no good as a nation, but knowing myself, I also know the things that will make me a better person in society."

"From this training, I now realize I was engaged in mere destruction."

"The training has made me know that it is meaningless fighting one another."

5. Rebuilding the Community

Respondents were asked if they had been involved in or shared responsibility for activities to benefit the community since being involved in the training. 21% stated that they had been involved in general cleaning of their community, 23% responded that they were involved in community agriculture and gardening, 18% mentioned helping to construct or maintain community infrastructures and 10% had formed drama groups to deliver the message about peace and reconciliation. Other activities such as peace keeping and disarmament, organizing sports clubs and activities, resolving conflicts in the community, repairing roads, providing civic and health education, developing and implementing a micro-credit scheme, and raising funds for community projects were listed. Over 969 activities were listed in response to this question (an average of approximately two per participant) indicating that overall YRTEP participants have been very actively engaged in activities to benefit their communities.

The Learning Facilitators also identified activities that they observed of YRTEP participants that are related to rebuilding communities as shown in Table 3.

	Frequency
Community Farming/Gardening	30
Road Maintenance/Brushing Roads/ Sand Banking/Repair Street Drainage System	22
Cleaning in the Community/Environmental Cleaning	18
Helping in Community Rebuilding of Structures/ Building of Court Barrie	11
Well/Toilet Building/Repair	8
Cleaning the Water Supply	7
Forming Social Clubs or Teams to Share Learning	7
Individual and Team Efforts to Resolve Conflicts	7
Sports Activities Both Within and Outside Community	6
Forming Drama Groups/Peace Sensitization	5
Rice/Ground Nut Production: Profits Go to Rebuilding Houses	6
Involved in Human Rights Campaign	6
Involved in Polio Campaign	6
Organized Campaign on STDs	6

Table 3

In addition, the Learning Facilitators reported observing the organization of concerts and video shows, planting of trees, making bricks to assist in rebuilding houses, the conduct of an environment and health education campaign, collecting street children for NGOs, the provision of food for participants during training and joining a skills training program or returning to school.

Activities such as road maintenance and brushing, planting community gardens, cleaning up and helping to rebuild community structures, cleaning the environment, all of which involve organizing and planning were the most frequently mentioned, mirroring the respondent's perceptions. As one participant commented, "The most important thing I have learnt in this program is working as a team." This data clearly indicates that participating in the YRTEP training was supportive of respondent's efforts toward rebuilding their communities.

"Because we are living in shattered communities everybody feels he/she is not responsible. But the program has created awareness to contribute to the rebuilding of the community."

"Helped me to think of constructing social structures in my community e.g., a market."

IV. Conclusions and Recommendations

The YRTEP Program has accomplished what it set out to do and has done it extraordinarily well. The program has made a significant difference in the lives of the participants, and they have done things they would not have done if they had not participated. They have gained information they would otherwise not have had the opportunity to acquire. They have learned to read and write gaining the power that literacy brings to their lives. They have learned to work with numbers in very practical ways that they use in their day-to-day lives. Their physical health has benefited from the information they have been exposed to and they are better able to manage health concerns. They have learned about democracy and good governance and are prepared to participate more fully in the electoral process and in the governance of their communities. They have learned a variety of ways to manage stress and conflict. They have become more self-reliant and are better able to generate income. They have learned the importance of the environment and how it affects their well being. They have learned much about farming practices that, were it not for the war, would have been learned from their families. And perhaps, most importantly, they have rediscovered who they are and what they are capable of doing and becoming. They have glimpsed what is "normal" and come to recognize the possibilities for life in a time of peace. In summary, the work of achieving peace and reconciliation has been significantly advanced.

The YRTEP program was originally seen as a transition program to bridge the gap between war and peace until such time as Sierra Leone would be able to "get back to normal." It is clear that the program has been much more than that and that it should be continued until such time as all of the ex-combatants and war affected youth are resettled peacefully in their communities. There is an important role for the program in terms of building self-reliance, confidence and competence. The literacy/numeracy approach used in the program has had outstanding success and will be useful for the foreseeable future as the most viable alternative to achieving literacy and numeracy for the adults and youth in villages and towns who are unable to access or enter the formal education system.

"The program came in at the right time. So I advise that the organizers extend it to other areas so that every community will benefit."

"I would like the training to extend nation wide to rebuild our shattered communities."

"I am actually interested in this training, it has help me tremendously to change my behavior and evil attitude toward the community. I am praying that the management would continue to support this program logistically."

"The main thing that I would like to comment about this training program is that it is very important and I would like to encourage my friends to be part of this program. It has helped me. I do not want this to pass by."

"This training is important to me as it has made me a peacemaker and to be self-reliant and how to use my environment. I will therefore encourage MSI and WV to continue this program as with this training, we are now mingling cordially with the RUF who are just next door. Thanks to this program."

"The program is very useful. I want it to continue because I have already started seeing its usefulness in my life."

"The community has benefited by the training that we have acquired."

"As an ex-combatant, this program has given me confidence to live with members of my community. I wish to make an appeal that other ex-combatants be targeted."

In addition, while not a stated objective of the program at the outset, a significant by-product of the program is the personal and professional growth that has taken place among the Master Trainers and Learning Facilitators. The Master Trainers and the Learning Facilitators are a large group of individuals within Sierra Leone who have received intensive training and experience through this program. As a result of their role in their communities and the overall positive manner in which they are regarded by program participants, they have in many cases de facto become genuine leaders and a voice of reason and stability in an unstable environment and are looked to as valuable resources both within and outside of their direct participation in the program.

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